

VZCZCXRO3612
RR RUEHBC RUEHCHI RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHDT RUEHGI RUEHHM RUEHJS RUEHKUK
RUEHLH RUEHNH RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHKL #0738/01 2320606
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 190606Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1513
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000738

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [MY](#)
SUBJECT: PAS REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR OPPOSITION ALLIANCE

REF: KL 665 UMNO-PAS TALKS PROVOKE CONTROVERSY

Summary

1. (SBU) In its annual convention, the Malaysian Islamic Party confirmed continuing support for the opposition alliance despite the recent PAS dialogue with the ruling coalition, the United Malay National Organization (UMNO). PAS leaders predictably condemned U.S. actions in Iraq and Afghanistan but reiterated the party's stand against terrorism. There was a clear divide among PAS delegates over the issue of talks with UMNO and in the end delegates supported a proposal for 8 informal dialogues with UMNO confined to issues relating to Islam. End Summary.

PAS 54th Annual Convention: PAS for All

2. (U) Malaysian Islamic Party PAS held its annual convention from August 15 thru 17, meeting for the first time in the opposition-controlled state of Perak. Poloffs attended the opening ceremony, along with diplomats from Singapore, Australia and Sweden. Several foreign Islamic party representatives were in attendance, including Dr. Amman Said of Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood, Amir Hidayah of Indonesia, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKSI), Man Kutrunus from Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AK) Pakistan Jamaat Islami Party representative Qazi Hussain Ahmad, and Haji Abdul Ghaffur of the Myanmar Islamic Movement. For the first time de facto opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim attended the opening ceremony. Anwar was warmly embraced by those PAS leaders, such as PAS think tank director Zulkifli Ahmad, who had opposed the party's talks with UMNO, but more formally greeted by those such as PAS electoral chief Mustafa Ali, who had promoted the dialogue with UMNO.

3. (U) The traditional opening Koranic reading focused on unity between Muslims and non-Muslims, reflecting the theme of this year's convention. In his keynote address, PAS leader Hadi Awang reiterated that the Islamic party has always promoted the concept of universal justice transcending racial and national boundaries, looked after the welfare of non-Muslims and strongly supported the role of the UN in ensuring a peaceful world. Turning to domestic politics, the party leader stressed that PAS will not be taken for granted by coalition partners who may take advantage of the Islamic party's far superior grassroots network during elections and but ignore the party after the elections. He also took a dig at UMNO's move to create a state within a state, by appointing pro-UMNO village heads at the grassroots principally to destabilize the new opposition state administrations. The party President advocated the establishment of a Chief Ministers Council to better coordinate relations between the five opposition controlled states. He also touched on the traditional criticisms of the ruling coalition on corruption, mismanagement, abuse of power, human rights violations and unjust laws.

U.S. Actions Condemned

14. (U) Hadi became emotional in addressing international issues. He condemned U.S. unilateral actions⁸ in Iraq and Afghanistan and lamented the misconceptions of Islam in the West, especially in the U.S. Hadi reiterated PAS, stand against terrorism, pointing out that PAS was one of the first to condemn the bombing of foreign embassies and the World Trade Center in New York, as such acts were against the teachings of the Koran. He added, however, that violence begets violence⁸ and the vicious cycle will go on until the UN looks into the root causes of terrorism and violence. As an example he cited the Palestinians, who were victims of Zionism.⁸ He also urged GOM and OIC to immediately recognize Kosovo and to look into the International Criminal Court (ICC) charges against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, which will not resolve the crisis in Darfur.⁸ Hadi concluded that relations between the West and Islam should not be viewed as a clash of civilizations.

Delegates Divided on Talks with UMNO

15. (SBU) Throughout the three day convention, PAS delegates clearly were divided over talks with UMNO (Reftel), with some speaking out in support of the dialogue and others questioning such contacts with the enemy.⁸ In the end delegates unanimously approved a resolution endorsing PAS, coalition with PR and calling for the opposition alliance to be strengthened. They also supported the call for informal dialogues with UMNO but only in regard to Islam. Party Secretary General Kamaruddin Jaafar told poloffs that

KUALA LUMP 00000738 002 OF 002

although there were concerns initially over Pakatan component parties treating PAS as a junior partner, delegates felt that the party's future lies with the opposition coalition. However, there was a reluctance to offend the powerful Ulama (religious leaders) council, a majority of whose members had endorsed the talks with UMNO, so a compromise was reached to allow such talks but limit them to issues of Islam.

Comment

16. (SBU) The convention clearly endorsed continued PAS cooperation with PR with the caveat that the party expects not to be taken for granted by its coalition partners. The approval for continued talks with UMNO on religious issues could be seen as a warning to the opposition alliance partners that PAS has other options if the PR fails to meet its needs. Next year's party elections could ultimately determine the party's direction in this regard, with possible competition shaping up between those who strongly support the PR and others who advocate talks with UMNO in the name of Malay unity and Islam. End comment.

KEITH